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Classified By: ADCM William H. Duncan for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY AND COMMENT: The Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA) terrorist group faces a shortfall of experienced leaders, reportedly with less than three dozen hard-core members directing the group's efforts to establish an independent Basque Country. While ETA regenerates its leadership following each arrest, the quality of those promoted - increasingly young and inexperienced, with less ideological and tactical training and limited time to consolidate their authority - appears to be progressively deteriorating. This cable, based on Spanish press reports and POLOFF's outreach to ETA watchers, provides Post's best assessment regarding who's who among ETA's remaining leadership, an endeavor which is prone to imprecision due to the murky nature of the subject matter and the reliance on unproven allegations of reported roles within the group. The five senior-most leaders in ETA's Executive Committee are all highly radicalized and disposed to keeping fighting for Basque independence.

[1](#)2. (C) Spanish and French joint operations over the past seven months have arrested 11 of the group's 41 senior-most leaders, as identified by ETA in internal documents captured in April 2009. Spanish media, citing counter-terrorism (CT) sources, identified the 41 by name following the seizure of the ETA membership roster. These 41 are believed to command between 175 - 300 operational members. ETA also counts on the support of 208 "reserves," who are mostly youths who have demonstrated their commitment to violent Basque nationalism through "kale barroka," ETA-inspired street violence. Some of these youths may later formally join ETA. Beyond its actual membership, ETA still can count on the support of a sizable portion of the Basque (and to a lesser extent Navarran) population. Radical nationalists have secured roughly 100,000 votes when they have participated in recent elections, although this level of support is trending downward. Florencio Dominguez, the Director of the Basque News Agency and the consensus pick among POLOFF's contacts as the person who knows the most about ETA, on November 16 told a closed-door audience at a CT conference co-sponsored by Embassy Madrid that ETA faces "an unprecedented crisis" in its 50-year history. END SUMMARY AND COMMENT.

//The Executive Committee//

13. (C) ETA's highest authority is its Executive Committee, known as the Zuba, which is formed by an odd-numbered group of officials (historically ranging from 5-11 people) representing the group's political, military and logistics wings. Most press reports suggest that there currently are five individuals in the Zuba, all of whom are highly radicalized and disposed to keeping fighting for Basque independence. By all accounts, ETA is a very hierarchical organization and - in contrast to radical Islamic terrorists - individual cells do not have the leeway to create their own operations in furtherance of broadly defined goals set by senior leadership. Following the latest arrests (Ref A), most media accounts identify the five as: Juan Cruz Maiztegui Bengoa, alias "Pastor," "Zulos," or "Alona"; Jose Luis Eciolaza Galan, aka "Dienteputo;" and Iratxe Sorzabal, and brothers Eneko and Ibon Gogeoascoetxea, who head the political, logistics and military units, respectively. All five are on the list of ETA's 41 leaders. Following a period in which a younger, less experienced generation led by longtime military leader (2004-08) Txeroki rose quickly through the ranks, all but one of the current Zuba members have been in hiding for more than a decade and all have proven themselves through ETA cell membership rather than street violence.

14. (C) Pastor, age 63, serves as ETA's ideological force. Despite more than 30 years of ETA activity, there are reportedly no outstanding warrants for his arrest, which would complicate his prospective extradition if he were detained. He spent numerous years in exile in Mexico and was last seen in public in 1998, when Belgium granted him

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political refugee status. It is virtually assured he does not reside in Spain. He is the alleged author of some ETA's recent communications.

15. (C) Dienteputo, age 49, joined ETA in 1976 and - after reportedly being involved in six murders during 1980-83 - fled to France, where he was arrested in the early 1990s. He jumped bail and went to Mexico, where he served as the group's logistical link with ETA members in Central America. In 2005 he returned to ETA's leadership as an experienced right-hand man to then military leader Txeroki. Dienteputo reportedly may serve as ETA's treasurer, but also is often depicted as highly supportive of ETA's use of deadly force. Along with Pastor, Dienteputo is often cited as the quintessential example of more experienced ETA members returning from exile in Latin America to take a more central role in the group's affairs.

16. (C) POLOFF increasingly hears from contacts that Jose Antonio Urriukoetxea Bengoetxea, aka Josu Ternera, either has been sidelined from ETA's senior leadership by more radical elements or he has removed himself from the group's leadership - possibly to return at a later point - after raising his profile during the most recent negotiations. In either scenario, his influence these days is questionable. ETA's longest-serving active member - he joined in 1968 - Ternera spent the bulk of his life as a hardliner before serving as the "pragmatic" guiding force in having the group enter peace talks with the Zapatero government in 2006. More radical members led by then military leader (2004-08) Txeroki sabotaged the peace process by carbombing a parking garage at the Madrid airport at the end of 2006. Neither Ternera, nor his son, Egoitz Urriukoetxea Laskibar, who was active in the negotiations, appeared on the list of 41. Ternera, age 58, has been in hiding since 2002, as has Egoitz since 2003.

//The Political Apparatus//

17. (C) Following the October 2009 arrest of Aitor Elizaran (who was not on the list of 41), Iratxe Sorzabal, age 37, is widely considered ETA's new political leader, marking the second time that a woman has held this post. A member since

the mid-1990s (See Ref D), she was arrested in 1997 and again in 2001. As reported in the Department of State's 2002 Human Rights Report, she filed formal charges of torture following her 2001 arrest. The charges against Sorzabal stemming from her arrest in 2001 were later dropped. She reportedly has played a role in three deaths attributed to ETA and has been in hiding since 2005. Recent media reports have speculated she may have an infant child. The political apparatus (Poltsa) has sub-units devoted to relations with exiled members living outside Spain, international relations, negotiations, and dealings with all facets of the Basque National Liberation Movement (MLNV), including Ekin, the MLNV's political strategy unit; Batasuna, ETA's outlawed political party; SEGI, an ETA-affiliated youth group; and LAB, the independence-minded Basque workers union.

//The Military Apparatus//

18. (C) Ibon Gogeascoetxea, age 44, reportedly is ETA's new military chief following the April 2009 arrest of Jurdan Martitegi. He comes from a family with extensive, multigenerational ties to ETA and an unyielding belief in the group. Press reports suggest the two brothers - who speak fluent French - were brought up in the hopes of joining the senior leadership of the group, a goal their father was never able to reach. They are the first siblings to be in Zuba at the same time. A one-time scriptwriter for the Basque public broadcasting company, Ibon is best known for his role in a plot to assassinate King Juan Carlos I during the inauguration of the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao in 1997 and has been in hiding since then. The military apparatus (Ekintza Saila or Esa) has three sub-units - armed cells, military logistics and training - and also has oversight for the "Reserves Apparatus," which consists of four units: disciplinary commission, the security department, internal bulletins and the internal courier system.

19. (C) Other senior leaders in the military apparatus who are on the list of 41 include 34-year-old Izaskun Lesaka, another leading woman in ETA (see Red D) whom the Spanish media have profiled as the "brains" behind ETA's 50th anniversary

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attacks. Known as "La Literaria" for her early work alongside Pastor in wordsmithing ETA's communications, she has since allegedly moved to operational work. She has been in hiding since 2005 and reportedly was close to Txeroki and his successors.

110. (C) Eusebio Arzallus, alias "Paticorto," is another longtime veteran of ETA who is on the list of 41. A naturalized Nicaraguan citizen, he spent numerous years in the 1980s as ETA's military logistics chief in Sandinista-ruled Nicaragua and was a liaison to Popular Liberation Front in El Salvador. Roughly 52 years old, he is perhaps best known for running a massive, underground arms supermarket in Managua - complete with hydraulically-operated steel doors concealing tons of weaponry, C-4 explosives, rocket-propelled grenades, surface-to-air missiles, and blank passports - that accidentally exploded in 1993. He allegedly fled to Mexico and may have had a role in kidnapping numerous businessmen, including one for whom a ransom of \$30 million reportedly was paid. The U.S. Department of Treasury designated Paticorto as a terrorist in 2002. He reportedly has returned from Latin America and is now more centrally involved in the group's activities.

//The Logistics Apparatus//

111. (C) Eneko Gogeaskoetxea, age 42, leads the logistic apparatus (Lohi) and is best known for his role in the 1997 plot to assassinate King Juan Carlos I. Like his brother Ibon, he has been in hiding since that incident, when he is alleged to have killed a Basque policeman as he fled the scene. Originally a computer expert, he has become an explosives specialist. The Logistics apparatus is comprised

of units devoted to electronics, purchases, and research and development.

¶12. (C) Key members of Eneko's logistics team who are also on the list of 41 include 46-year-old explosives expert Tomas Elgorriaga Kunze, aka "Teo," a veteran electronics engineer who reportedly is "obsessed" with both creating innovative new ways to detonate explosives and with fine-tuning the composition of ETA's bombs to secure maximum fatalities. (See Ref E). Highly intelligent, he reportedly resided in Germany for a time and is known to have traveled on a false Swiss passport. In 2006 a French court condemned Kunze, along with Eneko, in absentia to three years in prison. The recent seizure of a number of caches containing explosives, detonators and timers (See Ref A) has raised hopes that this material can be traced to Kunze. One ETA watcher recently suggested to POLOFF that security services could make the greatest impact by arresting Kunze.

//Others//

¶13. (C) The Civil Guard's (GC's) website for Most Wanted ETA members (<http://www.guardiacivil.org/buscados/index.jsp>) currently includes more than a dozen other members of the list of 41, including: Benat Aguinagalde Ugartemendia, Bernardo Atorrasagosti Ordonez, Inaki Dominguez Acalabandaso, Oier Eguidazu Bernas, Ugaitz Errazkin Telleria, Carlos Garcia Preciado, Xabier Goyenechea Iragorri, Oroitz Gurruchaga Gogorza, Inaki Irribaren Galbete, Ignacio Lerin Sanchez, Ernesto Prat Urzainqui, Joseba Inaki Reta de Frutos, Ivan Saez de Jauregui Ortigosa, and Alejandro Zoboran Arriola. Spain in February 2009 asked the USG to designate Reta de Frutos - as part of a larger list, including Ternera - as a terrorist. Reta de Frutos was convicted to eight years imprisonment in September 2008, but fled justice and is a fugitive.

¶14. (U) Members of the list of 41 who have not yet been discussed above and are not on the GC's Most Wanted list include: Arkaitz Aguirregabiria del Barrio, Aritz Azcona Dominguez, Jesus Ignacio Blas Cea, Andoni Cengotitabengoa Fernandez, Garikoitz Ibarlucea Murua, Mikel Jimenez Martin, Aitor Mokoroa Gonzalez, German Domingo Olalde Exteberria, Rafael Santiago Azcolain, and Eider Uruburu Zabaleta.
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